

Runnymede Borough Council

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

28 January 2020 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee Present: Councillors M Nuti (Chairman), J Sohi (Vice-Chairman), M Adams, B Clarke, M Cressey, R Edis, M Harnden, C Howorth, M Kusneraitis and J Wilson

Members of the Committee absent: Mr M Litvak (Independent person)

468. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read the procedures to be followed in the event of fire or other emergency.

469. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of its wish that the change listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be reappointed.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Remove From Membership</u>	<u>Appoint Instead</u>
Conservative	Councillor D Anderson-Bassey	Councillor C Howorth

The Chief Executive had given effect to this request in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

470. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record. It was advised that the follow up report on the Local Plan would be done in quarter 4 and reported on in due course.

471. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no items of business for the Independent person.

472. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT FOR OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee reviewed the 7 outstanding recommendations from completed audits, and noted the written explanations provided by relevant Corporate Heads.

It was agreed to keep the follow-up report on the initial 'shallow test' audit of the DSO planned for the next year's programme.

With regard to completion of e-learning for Freedom of Information, reminders had been despatched to all staff by the relevant Officers and followed up by the Learning and Development Manager to ensure all staff completed mandatory training by the revised deadline of 31 March 2020.

Members noted that revised targets had been agreed for these and the implementation of recommendations from GDPR preparedness and Section 106 agreements.

473. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2019/2020

The Committee noted satisfactory progress with the Internal Audit programme for 2019/2020. There were no priority 1 recommendations to report and TIAA had not been advised of any potential frauds or irregularities since the last summary report had been issued. There were 2 priority 2 recommendations to note with regard to Risk Management and Housing Enforcement both of which had attracted a 'reasonable' assurance. The Head of Housing had provided supplementary comment with regard to the latter audit confirming that anti-social behaviour cases were often very complex and that their procedures were being reviewed for consideration by the Housing Committee at a future meeting.

Commercial Rents, Commercial Property Redevelopment, Payroll and Accounts Receivable had been given 'substantial' assurance. Officers anticipated that the audits on Governance and Planning Enforcement would be completed shortly. In progress were audits on Housing Allocations and Homelessness, and Capital Accounting with a further 10 scheduled to start in February and March 2020.

There was some discussion about feedback from auditees and it was concluded that Officers disagreeing with audit findings and recommendations would be invited to the meeting in future to explain any points of difference with the auditors and for those comments to be incorporated in the audit report.

474. INTERNAL AUDIT DRAFT ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/2021 AND STRATEGY

Officers from TIAA presented the Committee with a draft document for discussion, outlining their ideas for the audit programme for 2020/2021.

The Committee was informed that TIAA's Audit Director had met each of the Council's Senior Managers/Corporate Heads and gathered feedback on which areas should be audited and what the audit's scope should cover but that he did not intend to alter the plan significantly as a result of those discussions. He did confirm however that the plan would retain flexibility and focus on the key areas as directed by the Committee who sought a more 'Member' led programme.

Members were invited to give further feedback. This included the suggestion that all SLT members have an audit of at least one of their areas every year and that the Local Plan follow up audit be brought forward.

TIAA's Audit Director was asked to consider moving the GDPR audit from Digital Services to Law and Governance and Procurement and Project Management from Law and Governance into Corporate Services. It was agreed though to keep the proposed audit on the Leisure contract in the programme.

A special meeting of the Committee was arranged for 17 March 2020 to finalise the programme. The Committee would also need to agree the revised number of 175 days in total for the audit programme by making adjustments to the planned audits. It was also agreed that Officers from BDO would present their draft Annual Audit Plan to that meeting as well.

Members wished to have an informal meeting immediately prior to the Committee meeting which Officers would arrange.

475. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS QUARTER 3 2019/2020

The Committee reviewed the 12 complaints and 24 compliments that had been recorded on the central registers from October to 31 December 2019.

Members were advised that although no complaints had been upheld in the last quarter, it was important to extract lessons that could be learned to avoid complaints in the future. Issues highlighted the importance of clear, regular and prompt communication with complainants.

Officers were pleased to report that compliments received in Quarter 3 showed how individuals had combined efficiency with a caring and professional manner and also how well teams worked together to keep up the appearance of the borough. The DSO had received a significant number of compliments, as had staff in Safer Runnymede and Green Space; all those complimented would, as was now the practice, be thanked on behalf of the Committee personally.

Members noted those complaints and compliments relevant to equalities.

Officers advised that to comply with GDPR, compliments from before 2018 had been removed from the register but that complaints were not due to be reviewed until 2022.

In line with best practice and guidance published by the Ombudsman Officers would be reviewing the Council's 'vexatious complaints protocol' and updating the website to modernise the information given on submitting feedback to the Council.

476. COMMERCIAL SERVICES AUDITS

The Committee noted two very positive audits completed for Commercial Rents and Commercial Property Redevelopment. Neither had attracted any recommendations and Officers were commended for this.

An issue with regard to the budget for Egham Gateway was raised about which Officers would correspond separately with Members, to provide an explanatory note with regard to the budget.

477. REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee was asked to note a report which had been presented to the Corporate Management Committee in December 2019. That Committee had resolved that the Standards and Audit Committee should also have the report as it concerned an elected Member of the Council.

Members were advised that the Member in question had not breached the Members Code of Conduct and the events took place before he became a Councillor. The matter had been resolved satisfactorily.

478. ADDLESTONE ONE RISK REGISTER

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee reviewed the risk register for Addlestone One, a project that was nearing completion with few 'live' risks.

With regard to progress with the project the Committee was informed that the retail market had slowed generally in line with national trends, but the development was let for all but one remaining unit. The residential units continued to sell well.

The forthcoming change in staffing was noted as was the importance of a detailed hand over to cover key current and future issues.

Officers confirmed that owing to the high usage of the Addlestone One car park at peak times it would be appropriate to review the fees and charges at a future meeting of the Corporate Management Committee. Officers were requested to check that the 'tap and pay' system was fully functioning and to advise Members accordingly.

479. EGHAM GATEWAY WEST RISK REGISTER

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Members noted the Risk Register for the Egham Gateway West development which was reaching a critical stage with key decisions to be made by Corporate Management Committee and full Council, if approved, in February 2020. Members were invited to an important workshop in the first week of February.

Officers confirmed the process for creation of and filtering entries in the register to focus on significant items. It was suggested that in the final column of the spreadsheet expected end dates could be added.

The most recent spreadsheet had been updated since publication of the agenda. Officers advised that the Council did have to adhere to statutory deadlines with regard to the Committee process, this necessitated an agreed 'lead in' time to receive finalised reports from originating Officers.

Officers responded to a number of technical queries about the project illustrating the importance of the handover mentioned in the previous item. In doing so the Committee thanked the Director of Commercial Services for his valued steering of the projects in his care.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.35pm)